

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0387

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IZ
SUBJECT: IRAQ, RUSSIA, AND THE GULF

1. SALMAN SABBAGH, BAHRAIN'S AMBASSADOR FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS, HAS PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION, WHICH REFLECTS HIS CONCERNS AND SUSPICIONS CONCERNING IRAQI OBJECTIVES IN THE AREA. WE PASS IT ALONG AS OF POSSIBLE UTILITY, SINCE THESE FEELINGS ARE ALLEGEDLY SHARED IN THE GULF AND ELSEWHERE.

2. SABBAGH SAID THAT WHEN HE WAS GIVEN THE ASSIGNMENT, HE DISCOVERED THAT EDUCATION WAS THE MOST EVIDENT FORM OF BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BAHRAIN AND IRAQ. WHILE NO ONE IN MANAMA KNEW FOR CERTAIN JUST HOW MANY STUDENTS WERE ENROLLED HERE, IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED IT WAS QUITE A FEW. UNTIL THAT POINT, IRAQ HAD REPORTEDLY BEEN FREE TO "RECRUIT" STUDENTS WITHOUT ANY SERIOUS CONTROLS BY THE
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GOB. AS THE RESULT OF HIS EFFORTS, SABBAGH DETERMINED THERE WERE ABOUT 600 SUCH STUDENTS, A FIGURE THAT HE TAKES RESPONSIBILITY FOR REDUCING TO 220 THIS YEAR. HE SAYS THAT BY NEXT YEAR IT WILL BE DOWN TO A LITTLE OVER 100.

3. THE GOB FELT ILL AT EASE WITH THE PROGRAM, EVEN BEFORE

SABBAGH'S EFFORTS, OUT OF FEAR THAT THE IRAQIS WERE PROVIDING THE STUDENTS WITH A FAIR BIT OF INDOCTRINATION IN BAATHIST IDEOLOGY IN ADDITION TO LESS POLITICALLY-ORIENTED EDUCATION, TO THE OVERALL AND EVENTUAL DISADVANTAGE OF BAHRAIN. AT ONE POINT, THE IRAQIS EVIDENTLY TOOK FOUR BAHRAINI GRADUATES TO BULGARIA FOR FURTHER STUDY, WITHOUT ADVISING ANYONE.

4. ACCORDING TO SABBAGH, THE IRAQIS HAVE COMPLAINED AT THE DWINDLING NUMBER OF STUDENTS FROM BAHRAIN. THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT IT RESULTS FROM A DECISION TO UTILIZE THE CULTURAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, AND WHICH HAD REMAINED VIRTUALLY UNUSED BECAUSE SO MANY STUDENTS CAME TO IRAQ.

5. SABBAGH ALSO CLAIMS CREDIT FOR HAVING DISCOVERED THAT THE GOI INTENDED TO PASS TO THE SOVIET UNION ANY REINSURANCE COVERAGE FROM THE ARAB FEDERATION OF INSURANCE COMPANIES THAT THEY THEMSELVES DID NOT WISH TO CARRY. THE PURPOSE, SAID SABBAGH, WAS TO PROVIDE THE USSR WITH ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PENETRATE THE GULF. BAHRAIN REPORTEDLY THWARTED THE PLAN BY URGING THE OTHER PARTICIPATING GULF STATES TO INFORM IRAQ THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO UNDERWRITE ANY REINSURANCE IRAQ ITSELF DID NOT WISH TO COVER.

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6. COMMENT: SABBAGH IS A BUSINESSMAN, ON HIS FIRST DIPLOMATIC ASSIGNMENT. (HE EXPECTS ANOTHER POST IN THE NEAR FUTURE: SWITZERLAND, KUWAIT OR SAUDI ARABIA.) WE DO NOT RATE HIM VERY HIGHLY AS AN AMBASSADOR, PARTICULARLY IN CONTRAST TO HIS ARAB COLLEAGUES, AND HE DOES TEND TO SEE A COMMUNIST BEHIND EVERY PALM, BUT HIS VERY EVIDENT CONCERN OVER IRAQ'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IS SHARED - TO VARYING DEGREES BY OTHER REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE GULF.

7. GULF SUSPICIONS OF IRAQ ARE NOT NEW, AND HAVE NOT BEEN HELPED BY ANY OF THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GOI'S RELATIONS WITH SOME OF ITS BROTHER ARABS OR, CONVERSELY, BY THE ASSUMED STATE OF THE RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN ANYTHING TO SUBSTANTIATE IT, BUT THERE APPEARS TO BE A GROWING CONCERN THAT IRAQ IS INCREASINGLY LEANING TOWARD ACTIVITIES THAT WILL BE DETRIMENTAL TO REGIMES IN THE AREA THAT DO NOT HAVE POLICIES COMPATIBLE WITH THOSE OF THE BAATH. THAT TAKES IN ALMOST EVERYONE.
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